

NEWSRelease

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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BLM
Burns District Office

VIRUS PROMPTS FEDS TO DISCOURAGE DOMESTIC HORSE USE IN WILD HORSE AREAS

HINES, Ore. – Due to the recent outbreak of a neurologic disease caused by the equine herpes virus (EHV-1) in the Western United States, the Oregon/Washington (OR/WA) Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the U.S. Forest Service are encouraging the public to avoid taking domestic equine to or through wild horse herd management areas and territories in eastern Oregon.

“There is a great deal of justified concern about EHV-1 and its potential impact to short and long-term holding facilities and wild horse and burro herds on the range,” said Gary McFadden, OR/WA BLM Wild Horse and Burro Program Specialist. “We are working hard to keep Oregon mustangs healthy and want to mitigate any possible spread of this virus to our herds.”

EHV-1 is primarily spread by direct physical contact between horses. The virus can also spread short distances (20-50 feet) via aerosol such as coughing and whinnying. People cannot become infected with the virus. However, EHV-1 can be moved from horse to horse by clothing or hands. Finally, the virus can be spread by objects shared between horses or people – buckets, bridles, halters, feed troughs, trailers, chutes, vehicles, etc.

McFadden said, “Wild horses may come toward the public, vehicles, domestic horses and riders. The Big Summit herd outside of Prineville is a good example – those horses will often approach domestic horses and even travel across the territory with them.”

No BLM-managed wild horses or burros on the range or at BLM facilities are known to have been exposed or affected by the neurologic EHV-1 outbreak at this time. However, the Bureau is consulting and coordinating with animal health officials regarding the movement of wild horses and burros. Wild horse and burro adoption events are also being evaluated for potential of contact with people and domestic horses. Some lower-risk movements between BLM facilities or BLM facilities and adoption events will continue. Other movements may be cancelled because of concerns regarding potential exposure to EHV-1.

Over 2,500 wild mustangs call nearly 3 million acres of Public Land in Oregon home. The OR/WA BLM and the U.S. Forest Service ask the public to be aware of disease transmission risks and to avoid taking domestic equine to or through wild horse herd management areas and territories in eastern Oregon until the EHV-1 outbreak is under control. For more information, contact the Burns District Office at 541-573-4400.

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